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CONTROLS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 010978

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TEXT

TAGS: PREL, EFIN, PHUM, KNAR, TU

SUBJECT: ACTING FONMIN CONFIRMS ESTABLISHMENT OF
COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE TURKEY'S WARTIME COMMERCIAL
TIES TO NAZI GERMANY

REFS: (A) ANKARA 10813; (B) ANKARA 10578;
(C) ANKARA 10590

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES FRANCIS J. RICCIARDONE, EMBASSY ANKARA, REASONS 1.5 (B), (D).
2. (C) ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KORKMAZ HAKTANIR CONVOKED CHARGE OCTOBER 27 TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE GOT'S EFFORTS TO INVESTIGATE TURKEY'S WARTIME COMMERCIAL TIES TO NAZI GERMANY. HAKTANIR NOTED THAT STATE MINISTER SUKRU GUREL AGREED TO HEAD A COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION WITH THE AUTHORITY TO ACCESS DOCUMENTS THROUGHOUT THE GOT BUREAUCRACY. (NOTE: PROMINENT JEWISH PARLIAMENTARIAN AND FORMER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN CEFI KAMHI SEPARATELY TOLD US THAT HE WILL BE A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION.)
3. (C) HAKTANIR SAID THE GOT HAD BEEN FOLLOWING THE NAZI GOLD ISSUE SINCE LAST MAY. INITIALLY, THEY HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY TURKEY'S INCLUSION IN THE LIST OF NEUTRALS WHO HAD COMMERCIAL DEALINGS WITH THE NAZIS, BUT HE SAID THEY HAD SINCE "COME TO RECOGNIZE THE LOGIC." TURKEY HAD ALWAYS MAINTAINED EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH ITS JEWISH CITIZENS AND HAD PROVIDED SAFEHAVEN FOR JEWISH VICTIMS OF PERSECUTION IN EUROPE THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES, AND THEREFORE WAS "UNCOMFORTABLE" BEING PUT IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS NEUTRALS SUCH AS SWITZERLAND. THE COMMISSION WOULD TRY TO DETERMINE WHY TURKEY'S POSTWAR UNDERSTANDING WITH THE TRILATERAL GOLD COMMISSION HAD NEVER BEEN FINALIZED.
4. (C) HAKTANIR ASSURED CHARGE THAT TURKEY WILL PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE DECEMBER LONDON CONFERENCE. UNDER MINISTER GUREL'S COORDINATION, THE COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION WILL ESTABLISH A SECRETARIAT AND FORMULATE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOT. THE FINAL REPORT WILL BE SHARED WITH THE U.S. HAKTANIR SAID THAT FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 28-29 INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS, FOREIGN MINISTER CEM WILL REPLY TO SECRETARY ALBRIGHT'S LETTER TO HIM ON THIS SUBJECT. THE TURKISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON WILL FOLLOW UP WITH AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS TO ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT TURKEY IS COMMITTED TO CONDUCTING A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF ITS

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WARTIME CONDUCT. HE HOPED THE FINAL REPORT WOULD BE
WORDED IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT NOT HARM THE SENSITIVITIES
OF THE TURKISH PUBLIC.

5. (C) CHARGE WELCOMED THE GOT'S DECISION TO ESTABLISH
THE GUREL COMMISSION AND TO ATTEND THE LONDON
CONFERENCE. HE NOTED THAT STATE MINISTER SUKRU GUREL IS
A RESPECTED HISTORIAN IN ADDITION TO BEING A STATE
MINISTER, AND THEREFORE EMINENTLY QUALIFIED TO CONDUCT
THIS INVESTIGATION.

6. (C) COMMENT: WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FINAL REPORT
TAKE POSITIVE NOTE OF TURKEY'S APPOINTMENT OF A HIGH-
LEVEL COMMISSION CHAIRED BY A CABINET-LEVEL OFFICIAL WHO
IS ALSO AN EMINENT HISTORIAN AS EVIDENCE OF THE
SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE GOT IS APPROACHING THIS
ISSUE.

RICCIARDONE

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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